

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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O R 311021Z JUL 75

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4936

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 5065

EXDIS

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PDIP, LAGT US

SUBJ: FUTURE OF LAO-AMERICAN RELATIONS

REF: A) VIENTIANE 5047

B) VIENTIANE 5052

1. COUNTRY TEAM BELIEVES THAT IMPLICATIONS OF OUR PROPOSED NOTE (REF B) SHOULD BE CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD, FOR THEY MAY LEAD TO A SUSPENSION OF OUR RELATIONS WITH LAOS.

2. WE DO NOT NEED TO REVIEW THE EVENTS OF THE PAST THREE MONTHS THAT HAVE CAUSED THE SHARP DETERIORATION IN LAO-AMERICAN RELATIONS. THE ESSENTIAL POINT IS THAT WE HAVE ABSORBED MANY INDIGNITIES, ANY ONE OF WHICH COULD HAVE BEEN THE CAUSE OF SUSPENSION OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS. WE HAVE DONE SO BECAUSE IT SEEMED TO US THAT PRESERVATION OF AN EMBASSY, REDUCED TO ITS MINIMAL FUNCTIONS, SERVED THREE PURPOSES OF SOME IMPORTANCE: A) EMBASSY WOULD BE ONLY LISTENING POST IN INDOCHINA; B) WITHDRAWAL FROM LAOS WOULD BE VIEWED AS FURTHER AMERICAN WITHDRAWAL FROM ASIA; AND C) WITHDRAWAL WOULD FURTHER DEMORALIZE NON-COMMUNIST ELEMENTS IN LAOS, STRENGTHENING SENSE OF ABANDONMENT AND LEADING TO INCREASED NUMBERS OF LAO
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FLEETING THEIR COUNTRY. (THIS LAST POINT HAS NOW BEEN

MADE EXPLICITLY TO US BY SEVERAL LAO FRIENDS.)

3. IN EXERTING OURSELVES TO PROTECT AMERICAN INTERESTS, WE DECIDED EARLY ON THAT WE NEEDED TO DOCUMENT THE VIOLATIONS COMMITTED BY THE PGNU AGAINST THIS MISSION. WE HAVE THEREFORE RAINED DIPLOMATIC NOTES ON THE MFA. JUST IN LAST WEEK WE HAVE SENT NOTES: A) STATING U.S. DID NOT FIND CLIMATE PROPITIOUS FOR TALKS ON FUTURE AID (VIENTIANE 4789); B) DEMANDING RETURN OF MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT BELONGING TO EMBASSY AND INDIVIDUALS (POUCHED); C) PROTESTING CONTINUED DETENTION OF ROSEMARY CONWAY AND REQUESTING CONSULAR ACCESS (WE HAVE SENT TWO NOTES IN TWO WEEKS) (POUCHED); AND D) PROTESTING CONTINUED OCCUPATION OF EMBASSY COMPOUNDS (POUCHED).

4. IN RETURN, MFA HAS ALSO BEEN SENDING US NOTES, THE LATEST BEING ONE RESTATING PGNU POSITION ON COMPOUNDS (VIENTIANE 5047), AND THE SECOND ASKING US ABOUT SOME 240 TONS OF MERCHANDISE ORDERED BY USAID FOR LAOS AND WAREHOUSED IN BANGKOK (SEPTTEL).

5. THE IMMEDIATE CRUNCH ISSUE IS THAT OF THE MATERIALS, EQUIPMENT AND VEHICLES ON THE GSO COMPOUND WHICH PGNU HAS ADAMANTLY CLAIMED AS ITS OWN ON THE FALSE GROUNDS THAT THEY BELONG TO UAE. ON THIS, AS WELL AS ON THE WHOLE SUBJECT OF THE OCCUPATION OF THE COMPOUNDS, WE HAVE HAD IN THE PAST DAYS TWO LENGTHY CONVERSATIONS WITH AND SEPARATELY TWO WITH CHANSAMONE VONGSPHAY, THE NEW DIRECTOR OF POLITICAL AFFAIRS, WHO HAS BEEN BROUGHT INTO THE NEGOTIATIONS. WE HAVE MADE CLEAR THAT THE OWNERSHIP OF THESE MATERIALS WAS THE ONLY ISSUE WHICH AS NOT NEGOTIABLE; WE WERE DISSOLVING UAE AND WE WERE PREPARED TO ENTERTAIN PROPOSALS FOR THE SALE OF THE COMPOUNDS. THIS THEN IS THE ISSUE ON WHICH WE NEED DEPARTMENT INSTRUCTIONS FOR THERE IS THE IMPLICIT POSSIBILITY THAT UNLESS PGNU GIVES, WE SHALL INDEED BE FACED BY NEED TO CLOSE EMBASSY.

6. THE DIFFICULTY OF COURSE IS THAT RELATIVE TO OUR OVERALL PROBLEMS HERE, THIS IS A SMALL MATTER. THE CONFIDENTIAL

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AMOUNTS INVOLVED ARE NOT LARGE, BUT WHAT COUNTRY TEAM BELIEVES IS OF IMPORTANCE IS PRINCIPLE OF INVIOABILITY OF EMBASSY. IF WE GIVE ON THIS AND ACQUIESCE TO PGNU TAKING ALL MATERIALS, EQUIPMENT, ETC., FROM GSO COMPOUND, THERE IS NO OTHER LINE WE CAN DRAW. THIS WOULD BE PLAIN THEFT BY THE LAO GOVERNMENT OF USG PROPERTY; IT COULD IN NO WAY BE GLOSSED OVER AS BEING CONNECTED WITH AID, HOWEVER MUCH THE PGNU ASSERTS THIS CONNEC-

TION.

7. AS MENTIONED ABOVE, WE ARE STILL TRYING TO PRESS FOR PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS THROUGH PERSONAL DISCUSSIONS. (CHARGE HAS TRIED TO SEE ACTING FONMIN PHOUNE SIPASEUTH BUT SO FAR TO NO AVAIL.) IF THESE PROVE FRUITLESS - AS WE FEAR THEY WILL - WE PROPOSE THAT CHARGE DELIVER NOTE (PROPOSED REF B) IN PERSON TO PHOUNE IN ORDER TO MAKE ANOTHER DIRECT PRESENTATION OF THE CASE. (CHANSAMONE TOLD US THAT HE THOUGHT PHOUNE HIMSELF HAD MADE DECISION ON COMPOUNDS.) WE MIGHT ALSO MAKE ONE LAST TRY TO SEE SOUVANNA PERSONALLY (NO STONE LEFT UNTURNED), BUT UNFORTUNATELY HE LEFT TODAY FOR LUANG PRABANG AND MAY NOT BE BACK FOR A COUPLE OF WEEKS. THROUGHOUT PERIOD, WE HAVE SOUGHT TO KEEP HIM INFORMED INDIRECTLY; CHARGE HOWEVER HAS NOT ASKED TO SEE HIM BECAUSE HE IS EVIDENTLY POWERLESS IN THIS SITUATION, AND SEEING HIM COULD ONLY EMBARRASS HIM WITHOUT PRODUCING RESULTS.

8. ALL THIS IS HAPPENING WITH CORCORAN'S SCHEDULED ARRIVAL ONE WEEK OFF. HOWEVER, GIVEN THE WAY THINGS GO ON AND ON IN LAOS, COUNTRY TEAM DOES NOT RECOMMEND CHANGING CORCORAN'S PLANS. WE BELIEVE WE SHOULD CARRY ON AND LET NEW CHARGE PICK UP PROBLEMS WHERE THEY STAND.

9. IN SUM, WE REQUEST:

A. DEPARTMENT INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW FAR AND HARD IT WISHES US TO STICK TO POSITION THAT MATERIALS ON GSO COMPOUND BELONG TO EMBASSY AND ARE THEREFORE NON-NEGOTIABLE. THESE INSTRUCTIONS SHOULD FORESEE POSSIBILITY OF A SUSPENSION OF RELATIONS.

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B. DEPARTMENT COMMENTS AND INSTRUCTIONS ON OUR PROPOSED MANNER OF PROCEEDING.

C. DEPARTMENT CONSIDERATION OF CALLING IN LAO AMBASSADOR (IF HE IS STILL THERE) TO EMPHASIZE SERIOUSNESS OF ISSUES.
CHAPMAN

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NNN

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